

State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
Public Forum
February 1, 2007
Joplin, Missouri

SRC Members: Clay Berry, Ceil Callahan, James Pelfrey, Lawrence Luck, Debbi Head, Beverly Kaskadden, Donna Borgmeyer, Phyllis Lovett, John Wunder

RSB Employees: Mark Laird and Mike Merrick

Guests: James , Mary Lee Murdock – Joplin, MO, Kathy Crittenton – RSB Counselor, Carl Power – RSB Teacher, Chip Hailey – Joplin, MO, Lynn Hailey – Joplin, MO, Jim Smith – Webb City, MO

Kim Gerlt - Counsel Liaison

Public Forum is an opportunity for the SRC to get input about services or comments regarding Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. Comments need to be in general not regarding specific cases. Questions about Rehabilitation Services for the Blind are welcome as well as the processes of RSB.

Chip Hailey asked with all the technology changes that we're seeing what type of future jobs are RSB Teachers looking for.

Mark Laird said one of the things RSB has to do for future employment is to stress education and this is going to be the key. Blind individuals need to be better prepared than their competition. RSB has seen a steady on going increase in the amount of case service dollars that are being spent on education. In terms of working with businesses regarding technology RSB is working with the other state VR agencies in developing specific strategies to create working partnerships so that RSB can identify what are the job requirements and what adaptations blind or visually impaired individuals need to be successful in their job.

There was discussion about WalMart employing blind and visually impaired individuals.

There was also discussion about how blind and visually impaired students are sometimes held to lower educational standards. The House Bill 401 Task Force had to evaluate how students would be evaluated on standard state testing. Blind and visually impaired students need to be held to the same standards so that they can make it in the world.

Missouri School for the Blind is setting up a part time program where a student can go for 3 to 6 weeks to address the student's needs. Students can return to MSB as many times as they need to in order to refresh their skills. This is a small step towards helping blind and visually impaired students.

There was discussion about the Children's Vision Summit. This Summit is free and lodging and meals will be covered all a participant has to do is provide their own transportation to the Summit.

RSB employees were asked about how they keep up with current technology. Kathy Crittenton said that a Power Up conference is coming up and staff have requested to attend. Carl Powers discussed the technical employees within RSB. Staff within RSB are setting up a system where each office has at least 1 person who knows as much as possible about the new technology and can share this information with the other staff as it is needed for individual clients. Carl said in the last 6 to 7 years RSB staff have come a long way in their knowledge of new technology.

RSB is now doing a standard testing to make sure individuals who contract as rehab engineers are prepared and knowledgeable to perform the job.

RSB has been asked by the Governor's Office for the State Emergency Management Association (SEMA) to put together a plan of necessary services to be provided during a catastrophic emergency. RSB would like to know what type of services would be beneficial to blind and visually impaired. Suggestions included RSB act as a resource information center for blind individuals as to what other services are available. RSB could provide PSA announcing if you are blind low vision and need assistance contact RSB. Notify public to register with their city that they are visually impaired so that emergency personnel are prepared before arriving at blind/visually impaired individual's households. Transportation options for blind or visually impaired individuals. It was suggested that RSB have a database of blind and individually impaired individuals to be checked upon after a catastrophic emergency to ensure safety of the individuals. It was suggested that this list of individuals could be located in a different district office then where the residents are so that it's still available in the case of an emergency. It was also suggested that consumers be taught how to perform basic functions without relying on current technology, i.e., teach someone how to cook without using the microwave. There was also a suggestion to work with local law enforcement about how to deal with blind individuals in a crisis situation.

A question was asked about what type of services are available for a blind or visually impaired individual who would like to attend college. Individual was told to contact local RSB office so that a VR Counselor could assist the individual with services they may be eligible for.

State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
February 2, 2007
Joplin, Missouri

Meeting was called to order by Lawrence Luck, Chairman at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call: John Wunder, Beverly Kaskadden, Debbi Head, James Pelfrey, Ceil Callahan, Clay Berry, Donna Borgmeyer, Phyllis Lovett, Kim Gerlt, Lawrence Luck

Absent: Ruby Polk, Russ McCampbell, Brian Wekamp, Mary Kay Savage, Jim Surcharski

RSB Employees Present: Mark Laird, Mike Merrick

Jim Pelfrey made a motion to approve the November 2006 meeting minutes with the changes and Beverly Kaskadden seconded. Minutes approved with changes to name spelling.

Director's Report

Mark Laird gave the Director's report. Mark discussed the federal target 26 closures, which are successful closures. The minimum target is 247, which is 1 more than the previous year. RSB is currently 4 months into the fiscal year and is currently standing at 106 26 closures. RSB has 138 individuals who are in employment but have not completed either their rehabilitation plan or the minimum requirement of 90 days.

Staff Issues

A new District Supervisor, Wendy Metzinger, was selected for the Sikeston office. Wendy Metzinger was previously a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and has been in the Sikeston office since 2000. Wendy starts February 16, 2007. RSB currently has 3 critical field positions vacant: one Rehabilitation Teacher position in the Kansas City North office and 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions one in St. Louis North and one in Sikeston. Any potential candidates can forward their resumes to Mark Laird and Mark will forward to appropriate District Supervisor.

Family Support Division (FSD) Managers Meeting

FSD had a manager's meeting on November 7, 8 & 9. All of FSD's management present. FSD will be doing this twice a year. There were around 250 individuals present. RSB was highlighted at the meeting and was given the opportunity to present all of the different programs RSB offers. RSB had a room set up where individuals had the opportunity for hands on practice with different types of technology available to make employers aware of the technology available to assist a blind and or visually impaired individual to do their job. Janel Luck, FSD Director, was put under a sleep shade to demonstrate travel/cane skills. RSB had 2 ½ hrs for their presentation. This presentation was really well received and staff really enjoyed it.

Electronic Case Management System

RSB got approval from the Department of Social Services (DSS) to spend \$1.2 million on an electric case management system for RSB. Almost every vocation rehabilitation agency in every state has one, Missouri does not. Mike Merrick did a lot of research this system. At end of February some RSB staff will be visiting Michigan, New Mexico and Idaho to review their case management systems. Michigan and New Mexico both have a retail software program, Idaho has proprietary software program. These visits are to help RSB see what type of electronic caseload system they need. RSB will be looking at amount of time the system will save staff so that they have more time to be in the field, as well as easing administrative burdens, speeding the paper work flow and allowing management to obtain usable information for reports from the system. RSB is approximately 18 months to 2 years from implementing this system.

BEP Program

Mike Fester had talked about bringing in consultants to review BEP. There has not been a consultant at this point. RSB has had meetings with the BEP Coordinator and his assistant and will have another meeting next week. RSB will probably have a consultant come in within the next 3 months.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is at a point that one of the things that RSB has to do to complete the Strategic Plan is to have the Summit with the major consumer groups. There was 1 previous Summit consisting of 4 members from NFB and MCB and RSB. Mike Merrick is going to start working on organizing another Summit, as Mike Fester wants this as the change to get everyone's input on the strategic plan. Lawrence would like the SRC to be formally represented at this Summit and which Mike Fester was in agreement with. Lawrence appointed Ceil Callahan, Debbi Head, Lawrence Luck and Kim Gerlt from the SRC to attend this Summit. If Ceil Callahan can not attend Clay Berry or Beverly Kaskadden will attend in Ceil's place. Lawrence will chair and report back to the Council.

Transition Program

RSB is moving forward with a committee of people to develop a more comprehensive, user friendly, productive transition program. District Supervisor's comprise the committee and are collecting data from the field staff and anyone else who wants to give input. RSB is looking at transition from post secondary school, employment, independent living and children's specialist.

Call center

RSB has hired a Rehab Engineer to look at the new FSD Child Support call center to make it accessible for blind and visually impaired individuals as far as access issues in terms of any visual disabilities. This process is proceeding exactly the way these things have to proceed, taking the time to look at every detail so that when a blind or visually impaired individual is hired they are able to do the job completely. Looking at prescreening, training and then implementing a bid program where individuals bid on location where they would like to work.

Children's Vision Summit

DESE approved \$4500 toward the Children's Vision Summit from the Blind Task Force appropriation and RSB offered to pay \$7500 towards Summit. There is a Committee starting to put together the actual Summit. This Summit has been held 4 times total. Last year there were over 200 participants 50% were parents and children and the other 50% were teachers. The concept of the Summit is to bring people together and provide them with knowledge of blindness related issues, educational issues, resources, ect. Mike Merrick will send the dates and information regarding the Summit to the Council when all of the details are finalized. This Summit is free 2 day event with meals and hotel paid for; all a participant has to pay is for their way to the conference. Contact person is Mike Merrick.

Appointment Status

Lawrence talked with the Governor's office. If the Council sends a list of people in February who need to be appointed or reappointed the Governor's office will respond letting the Council know if they have everything they need or if they need more information. If anyone knows of someone who would like to be on the Council have them contact Kim and she will send them an application.

Recycled Computers

RSB has renegotiated the price of the recycled computers, which can now be purchased for \$55 a piece rather than the original \$100 price. 20 computers have been dispensed with the appropriate software on them. There was 1 exception for a child to get a computer since October, which was approved. In order to be eligible for a computer the consumer has to be a VR consumer. Children can be approved for a computer but it has to be done through an exception. SRC would like policy to include wording that computer be for Vocational Rehabilitation case, Mark Laird said that this is possible to do.

Live Stock

RSB requires written business idea of 50 to 100 words that address basic issues around the type of business, projected market and pricing structure. RSB requires feasibility study which addresses basic assumptions of marketability, pricing and conditions of business. RSB is asking that the feasibility study be done with the University Extension in the consumer's area. RSB requires a loan worthy business plan completed with a consultant, in terms of addressing any assumptions that underlies all business plan. Plan has to be approved by District Supervisor, CFO – Kevin Faust and Assistant Deputy Director – Mark Laird before business plan is approved. Debbi Head made a motion that the SRC will support this policy, James Pelfrey seconded, motion approved.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey

248 Status 26 surveys were sent out; of the 248 surveys 59 were returned. 280 surveys were sent all the individuals who had closures but were not 26 closures; of the 280 surveys 36 were returned. The average and most common answer for each question were reviewed. These survey results will be compared to the previous year's survey results and trend data will be sent to the members electronically.

RSA Annual Review

Mike Merrick gave a brief overview of RSA's review of RSB in fiscal year 2005 including the highlights as well as standards and indicators that RSB did not meet in that fiscal year. This report is available every year online.

Committees

When committees meet and make recommendations, decisions should be reported to the whole Council. If a committee has something urgent they should report back to the whole Council in between meetings otherwise report to the whole Council at the scheduled meetings. If a committee has a conference call the committee should try and schedule the calls between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Kim can take minutes during conference calls held by the individual committees.

Planning Committee: The planning committee's primary responsibility is the state plan and any other planning operation that Council has. The business network issues will be included in this committee. Members appointed to the Planning committee are Russ McCampbell, Beverly Kaskadden, Clay Berry and Ceil Callahan. Russ McCampbell will be the chair. Brenda Kennedy will be the contact at RSB for any business network issues, the committee is asked to include Brenda's input as well as giving information to Brenda Kennedy.

Evaluation Committee: The evaluation committee handles anything that the Council does to evaluate the performance and or operation of RSB, such as surveys and annual reports. Members appointed to this committee include Debbi Head, Beverly Kaskadden, Ruby Polk, James Pelfrey and Brian Wekamp. The chair is Debbi Head.

Program Policy committee: The program policy committee handles new policy and or program items from RSB rather than waiting until the next Council meeting. Members appointed to this committee will be Debbi Head, Jim Sucharski, James Pelfrey and Phyllis Lovett. Chair of this committee will be Jim Sucharski.

Governmental Affairs: The governmental affairs committee works on things happening at the state and federal level and that are governmental in nature. Members appointed to this committee include Donna Borgmeyer, Clay Berry, Brian Wekamp and John Wunder. The chair of this committee will be Donna Borgmeyer.

Southwest District Office

The Southwest District office serves 22 counties. There are 3 VR counselors, 3 Rehab Teachers, an O & M Instructor and a Children's Specialist. This district office serves approximately 26,500 blind and or visually impaired individuals. The Southwest district office led the state last year in production as well as the rehab rate. They are currently leading the state right now in production with 29 current successful closures. Most of the closures in the Southwest district office are either self employment closures or small businesses where they hire less than 20 individuals. Total number of active cases

including, OBS, CS, VR and ILR is around 530 active cases at any point in time. The Southwest District is the second largest district in terms of active cases.

Future Meeting Topics:

The next meeting will be May 3 & 4, 2007 at the Capital Plaza hotel in Jefferson City.

Committee reports

Jefferson City District Office presentation.

Summit meeting will be discussed

Any other agenda items can be sent to Kim or Lawrence